



Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet
Dallas Veterans Day Parade 11th Hour Ceremony
Dallas City Hall Plaza
Admiral Patrick M. Walsh
Thursday November 11, 2010

It is an honor to be here today and to participate in this wonderful commemoration and parade. I am especially grateful for the opportunity to come home to Dallas, to recognize the Veterans of World War II, and talk about the terrific men and women who have served in our armed forces.

In the 37 years since I departed Walnut Hill Lane for the United States Naval Academy, I have learned many lessons, witnessed many events, and had the privilege to visit and work with representatives from many countries.

There are three points that I would share from this set of life experiences that you, the people of Dallas, helped to provide me: (1) you always have the advantage, in any situation, when you are from Texas. (2) No matter where you are, no matter where your travels take you, that as long as you are with people who serve our nation, you are at home. (3) My understanding of the contribution that veterans have made to our society, my appreciation for the impact that they have made to stability in the world, and my respect for the sacrifice their families have made over the course of a lifetime...continues to grow in admiration and esteem with each year that I serve in uniform.

My remarks begin with you: our veterans, our friends, our extended family...because the days pass too quickly, our opportunities with each other too fleeting, our reunions too limited, to miss out on a chance to express our personal gratitude to each other...for each other.

I am grateful for the pride and energy that I sense here today and particularly to those who put so much of themselves into this parade. They wanted us to have a festive, spirited celebration, one that we would enjoy and remember. We want them to know how much their thoughtfulness and personal attention to this event means to us. They all have day jobs – to find the time to

remember other people during their own personal time is the mark of a great team and first class organization. (APPLAUSE)

You the audience have a role to play as well...you and me...because we will recognize veterans and their families, we will publicly express our appreciation for their life's work, and together, we will express the gratitude of a very grateful nation...that's our mission. So, today, we have an opportunity to recognize the contributions that veterans have made and in so doing, we the have a chance to remind ourselves and each other...what we believe, what we value, and the principles for which we stand.

Today, in cities around the nation, we see visible reminders in public ceremony as well as in private settings – where communities and families...pause, reflect, recognize, and memorialize the men and women who served our country. We are fortunate to know that in times of turmoil or crisis, we can rely on fellow citizens – oftentimes remembered simply as Soldiers, Sailors, Airman, Marines, and Coast Guardsmen...who have taken great risk to themselves and with their own lives to protect us, our livelihoods, and our opportunities for a safe and prosperous future. In return, they ask for nothing more than the simple appreciation of their sacrifice and for us to remember their loved ones.

In the course of my assignment in the Pacific, I routinely come across vignettes and examples from history where fate presented our servicemen and women with a difficult hand or a cruel blow. Each case reveals stories of honor and courage, commitment to each other, mission accomplishment, leadership under fire, and personal example – that is the inheritance our armed forces enjoys today.

At the dawn of WWII, the nation was under assault and we had lost every battle that we entered in the Pacific. The damage to the nation was more than the physical destruction contained at Pearl Harbor; it was psychological, which according to historians was far more widespread and debilitating. One author, Craig Nelson, described the country “in a state of panic by Christmas 1941. It was a time when most Americans thought the war was over, that the Axis had already won.”

We grew up learning about Texans who led a wounded, weak, and recovering nation to retake the initiative and win the war. Their names were legendary: Audie Murphy, a farm boy from Hunt County, helped raise 10 brothers and sisters, and was turned down when he tried to join the war effort because of his short stature (5'5"). Army infantry accepted him and recognized him as a highly decorated soldier and later the nation awarded him the Medal of Honor for action in the European theater. Oveta Hobby, wife of former governor William Hobby – who accepted a \$1 a year position in Washington to organize a military unit for women. She was the first director of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps for over 150,000 women, received successive promotions to the rank of colonel, and received the Distinguished Service Cross before her presidential appointment to serve as the first Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare. In the Pacific, one third of US and Allied forces were under the command of Fredericksburg native Admiral Chester Nimitz. His success in the war changed the course of events in the Pacific campaign, yet his defining characteristic was his devotion to the Navy and his simple desire to serve.

While historians provide extensive analysis about the strategic importance of battles during the war, those who lived it – such as our grand marshals -- provide another inspiring, legendary, and fascinating dimension to the historical narrative. Jesse Naul, Randy Reeves, James Magellas, and R.V. Burgin...their story gives us the insights into the indomitable spirit, strength, commitment, character, and resilience of the American people. Together, these are larger than life people who helped write history, and are a tremendous source of pride for all of Texas.

As I embarked on my life's journey, I had no idea when or under what circumstance where history or fate would introduce me to the quiet heroes among us.

Early in my naval career, I visited a Veterans Hospital in the heartland of America. An escort met me in the hospital parking lot and accompanied me up a long staircase that led to an old red-brick building. When we reached the top of the terrace, a nurse brought us into the building and down a long hallway. I remember the wooden floors creaked with each step as we walked into a ward that had several patients sitting on their beds waiting for us.

There were five men. They rose to their feet as we walked into their section of the room. All of them wore government-issued pajamas; all of them wore medals over their heart, one had difficulty standing because he balanced himself on a crutch – the lower half of his pajamas pinned to cover a missing limb. Overwhelmed by what I saw, I asked why do you stand so rigidly for me? One man stepped forward, apparently a spokesman for the group and said, “We stand proudly for what you represent, sir”

I was overwhelmed by their courtesy, by their life experiences, and by their inner peace and serenity. In our short time together, I could sense their commitment, dedication, and selflessness. I could see in their eyes and in the untold stories etched in the lines on their faces...courage, valor, and bravery. I could listen and learn of their love of God, of country, and of family. Each handshake could tell a story about their honesty, integrity, and strength of their character.

It has been many years since I met this group yet, I carry with me a vivid memory of a Friday morning in 1986, of five men whose life experiences in the service were more than I could comprehend. I do not remember their names; I did not know their rank; I do not remember their branch of service; I do not remember what jobs they held – I only remember their presence.

In my years of service...in my exposure to cultures and people from around the world...I have not come across a more compelling, sincere, or moving sight than the image I retain today, of five men, torn but not broken by war, lifted by honor and courage, standing for me in rigid silence in a hospital ward. Their stories and images were not captured by media, recorded for movies, reported in the press, blogged on the internet, or written in textbooks for generations of youngsters to learn and marvel at their undaunted courage or personal sacrifice...yet in my mind, these were the same men whose legendary work that we had studied in school were the same people who saved our nation and motivated generations of youth to serve their country.

It was a defining and memorable moment. They taught me, at a time and place when I least expected it. In their quietly confident, scrupulously honest way, they taught me lessons in humility and sacrifice. One message that they delivered that I want to share with you on this

wonderful occasion, is that there is not a more significant, heart-felt, meaningful expression in our language than the use of the word... STAND...used to describe both an inward form of conviction...and an outward sign of action. We use it to express the meaning:

To rise

To remain firm, steadfast

To take up a position

To perform a duty

To describe a determined effort

To uphold

To support

To represent

To symbolize

To advocate

To remain strong

To confront fearlessly

When we honor someone – when we recognize the value of someone’s work – when we express our heartfelt appreciation to someone – WE RISE. It is one of the most powerful forms of expression in our culture – more meaningful than any citation, award, or parchment because the symbolism attached to the elegant simplicity of this one simple word...is one of the highest forms of respect that one person can give to another.

In our language, it is potent, compelling, and influential because of what it means and what it implies...in personal inner strength and in personal conviction...and when voluntarily and

spontaneously offered by an audience...it is the highest form of public recognition...because in our culture, those who stand for you...are those whose respect you have earned.

Those who fought in World War II were, by any measure, an extraordinary team, at a remarkable time in history when together they turned a page in history. Our servicemen and women represented the pride of a generation who gave more than they received and positively affected the lives of more people than they will ever know...and that, ladies and gentlemen, is our nation's heritage and tradition. Today, we remember. We remember the distinguished service of those who served in World War II...we remember those who supported them...and the world will never forget how many are free today because of what they did for their fellow man.

To our World War II veterans, I can say with confidence and with pride...today, this audience, our state, and our nation stands proudly for you...and all that you represent.

Thank you and God bless you.